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(Comments Welcome Though!)

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Introduction

...to survive in the world we have to manage our situation; to meet our material needs and to stay sane we struggle to exert some control. Notice the language used here: ‘we have to manage’. This suggests that all humans are managers in some way.

Watson 1994: 12

These are skills we all need! Management education is all about real transferable skills: leadership, problem solving, teamwork. Everyday we are faced with a problem we need to manage, that is why a degree programme like this is really valuable. They don’t understand that!

Comment from the Head of Management in response to the news that his department was under threat of closure (1997)

Here we have two comments, seeking to relate to others, the relationship between management as a formal, professional activity and the skills we use to get by in our everyday lives. The first identifies how, in an environment that is seen as essentially hostile to the human species, the evolution of the race has depended on its ability to harness and regulate both the material and social world. This is not an ability that ends at the point at which ‘we’ encounter this external world, however. The posited human capacity for reflexivity and purposeful agency also places an imperative on us to learn to control our own feelings, intentions and actions. The success with which we interact with others, for example, is dependent as much on how we present our selves in terms of say dress, emotional disposition and our adherence to a whole set of social expectations and norms, as it does to the extent we are able orchestrate the environmental context of than interaction. It is perhaps in this broad context therefore, that Watson feels able to claim that we are indeed, all mangers of a sort. We choose between various material and cultural resources, and deploy them in what may seem to be the most appropriate way at the time. As such, it may be that the discourses and activities associated with professional management are able to act as broader cultural resources; resources which under the appropriate circumstances the individual may be able to draw upon, creatively reconfiguring them as they as they go, shaping them to their own needs and everyday circumstances.

The second comment appears, at first sight at least, to be premised upon the same underlying assumption. Namely, that we all in one way or another manage our daily lives. However, while these words were spoken in the face of a challenge to the integrity of the institution’s management degree programme, and as such, may be taken as nothing more than an attempt at self-justification, I would suggest that beneath the rhetoric there sits a more far reaching assumption. That is, it directly seeks to equate the resources
required to negotiate the trials and tribulations of everyday life with the formal language, techniques and, I would suggest, the largely taken for granted economic imperatives, associated with the activity of professional management. This represents, I would suggest, a far stronger claim than that which is found in Watson’s statement. It considers education programmes, primarily designed to meet the needs of an occupation concerned with coordinating capitalist socio-economic relations to provide an appropriate template for the generalist acquisition of everyday life skills. Management as a formal, technocratic activity is, therefore, argued to represent both the epistemological and normative basis upon which everyday life can, and indeed should, be conducted. Rather, than as suggested in the first quote, one possible resource amongst others, it can be seen to imply a process of colonization, legitimated by the explicit superiority of ‘management’ as a rational, technical activity.

It is the aim of this paper to explore critically the ideas implicit within both these statements and to consider their implications for the development of what has come to be termed ‘critical management studies’ (CMS). Central to this will be the concept of ‘everyday life’. That is, the socialized space which, in Featherstone’s (1992: 160) words, ‘provides the ultimate ground from which spring all our conceptualizations, definitions and narratives’. Traditionally, ‘everyday life’ has existed, from the vantage point of sociology at least, as an analytical space which can, and indeed should be accessed through the techniques and principles associated with interpretive or micro-modes of sociological analysis (Douglas et. al. 1980). While these particular approaches are themselves frequently sub-divided, Weigert (1981) describes what he considers to be the four leading perspectives that have been brought to bear on the subject matter of the everyday.

- **Dramaturgy/Symbolic Interactionism**, which draws on the ideas of Mead and Goffman, and which places the study of role playing at the forefront of its concerns.

- **Ethnomethodology** associated most closely with the work of Garfinkel, which views society as the outcome of the practical accomplishments of individuals.

- **Phenomenology**, deriving from the philosophical undertakings of Husserl, Heidegger and Schutz, which places its emphasis on the study of the ways in which individuals ascribe their own meanings to ‘things’ and ‘events’, and the processes by which these meanings become shared.

- **Critical Theory**, developed most notably in the work of Lefebvre and, more recently, Habermas, which undertakes to expose the repressive influence of modes of formal or instrumental rationality on the everyday sense and decision making activities of individuals.

Each of these particular approaches bear a number of similarities, and indeed are frequently conflated into each other. However, the nature and limitations of a paper such as this restrict the scope of engagement that is possible. As such, the paper will largely restrict itself to a fairly unified exploration of the first three approaches as in such a way
that, it is acknowledged, may neglect some of the finer details, critical dissimilarities and divergences between them, and compare and contrast these with the critical tradition of the latter.

It must be stressed at this point that this is not an empirical research paper. It seeks to offer little in the way of supporting data, be it textual, ethnographic or whatever, to support ‘its claims’. Rather, it is a theoretical paper in the proper sense of the word, in that it seeks to explore the relationship between various concepts in an attempt to outline a possible, and very broad, research agenda. An agenda that may provide a useful dimension to the ongoing development of critical management studies as it seeks to establish itself in, what is after all, a predominately hostile academic environment.

Theorizing The Everyday

The social scientific interest in the ‘everyday’ has been something of a victim of academic fashion. Currently, however, it appears to be an idea whose time has once again come. Recently, for example, it has provided the backdrop for a range of sociological accounts of the extent to which contemporary processes of ‘rationalization’ have impacted upon peoples everyday cultural activities and how, in turn, to what extent these are resisted or reappropriated. De Certeau (1984: xv), for instance, has invoked ‘the space’ of everyday life as a critical and resistive one. That is, one in which ‘users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production’ and assert their agency and creativity. More generally, however, the term has been used in a broader sense to suggest the social context in which people experience a whole range of social phenomena. Thus we have monographs and edited collections which deal with Television and Everyday Life (Silverstone 1994), Crime and Everyday Life (Felson 1998) and The Body in Everyday Life (Nettleton and Watson 1998), each attempting to tap into what appears to be a renewed fascination with the ‘everyday’. Yet, despite this current upsurge in popularity, a concern with the everyday dimension of social life has in fact exerted a significant influence on the social sciences, especially sociology, for over the last sixty years or so; an influence which has been most evident in the work associated with phenomenological and ethnomethodological sociology and, although somewhat more implicitly, Marxian critical theory (CT).

Interactionism, Ethnomethodology, Phenomenology and the Everyday

While relatively distinctive in their approaches, interactionism, phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology share a number of common preconceptions about the nature of social reality and the centrality the everyday plays in its constitution. From the perspective of all these approaches, social reality is viewed as a construct of the subjective and intersubjective meanings ascribed to it by social actors in the course of their everyday activities. As such, the ontological status of society, as a set of relatively enduring relations of meaning and practice, while not dismissed, is thrown open to question. That is, social ‘reality’ is seen to change as the acts of describing and ascribing meaning to it also change. Within organization studies itself, a variation of these approaches has been associated particularly with the work of Silverman (1970), Child
(1972) and Zimmerman (1971); work which sought to understand the ways in which organizational members actively ascribe meaning to their everyday organizational activities and, as such, to organizational life itself. The object of their research was, therefore, the micro-level interactions and the everyday ordering of social relations through the mobilization of differing symbolic and cultural resources, rather than the study of organizations as enduring systems favoured by their structural-functionalist counterparts.

The philosophical foundations of these interpretive approaches are to be found largely in the phenomenological philosophy of Hegel (ed.1977) and Husserl (ed.1970) and their conceptions of the intersubjective constitution of reality and the *lebenswelt* or ‘life-world’ respectively. However, this philosophical phenomenology, particularly that to be found in Husserl’s work, is not, despite the continued significance of such concepts, quite the same thing as sociological phenomenology or its close cousin, ethnomethodology. While for example, in Husserl, the domain of consciousness remained the object of philosophical investigation; sociological phenomenology admits to and indeed, requires the existence of an external socio-historical environment (Douglas et. al. 1980) to which it must also direct its attentions. As Weigert (1981: 40) notes in relation to this point, ‘everyday life is subjective and existential as well as objective and structured’, and it is this understanding that makes a sociological phenomenology possible. This structuring is often understood in terms of the existence of what Schutz (1973) most notably, has referred to as ‘typifications’. These are the expected and taken for granted occurrences that we expect to encounter in any given social situation. They are the structuring forces of everyday normality. Yet, such typifications are also negotiated. People are potentially free to think or act in ways other than those that such typical expectations would demand of them and as such modify the very typifications they act in relation to.

Erving Goffman (1969) for example in his now somewhat seminal text on the ways in which explores how the ‘self’ is presented and re-presented to others in the form of a performance, acknowledges that such performances do not themselves occur within a social vacuum. Actors, as Goffman would have it, draw on material and cultural resources that both inform and legitimate their personal performances. Thus, what he terms ‘impression management’ (Goffman: 1969: 203) is a deeply social activity, not one which is the simple outcome of an isolated, monadic like individual. Berger and Luckman (1967) have provided perhaps the most well known attempt to combine the philosophical principles of phenomenology with the concerns of sociology. Developing what they considered to be a dialectical approach to the construction of everyday social reality, they argued that society is the outcome of a tripartite process. The first stage comprises of externalization, through which both physical and mental human activity is expressed in the form of socially experienced phenomenon. Secondly, such phenomenon become objectified; they take on the appearance of objects external and other to those who ‘created’ them. Finally, these now objective structures are internalized back into the consciousness of those individuals who were first responsible for them via the process of socialization’. Thus, in Berger’s (1969: 4) words
It is through externalization that society is a human product. It is through objectification that society becomes *sui generis*. It is through internalization that man is a product of society.

Freeman (in Douglas et. al. 1980: 137 *original emphasis*) suggests that this incorporation of a phenomenology of social consciousness into the more mainstream concerns of the sociological analysis of social structures has led to the emergence of what he terms a form of *macro-phenomenology*. That is, an attempt to ‘clarify the concrete relationship between specific conditions of consciousness and the larger socio-historical milieu’ (Douglas et. al. 1980: 137). A useful exposition of this idea is that to be found in Wagner (1973) who, as Freeman notes, occupies himself with the impact developments in the broader social environment have upon the ways in which individuals are able to engage in activities of sense-making in relation to the world around them. Such a macro-phenomenology brings to the fore then, the question of resources. That is, the need to study both the predominance at any given time of the range of structural resources upon which the individual is able to draw in the undertaking and managing their everyday activities and intersubjective encounters and, of equal importance, exactly how these are themselves made sense of and how they are ‘used’ to give meaning to the experiences of everyday life.

*Critical Theory and The Everyday*

Yet, while Berger and Luckman’s work clearly owes a great debt to Marx’s observation that ‘men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please’ (Marx [1852] 1954: 10), a significant criticism of the phenomenological tradition with which they have been identified has been its apparently ‘acritical’ approach to the understanding of everyday life. This in itself is perhaps not that surprising as phenomenology, no matter how sensitive to the relationship between consciousness and the socio-cultural environment, must always come down, in the last instance, on the side of the subject as the source of all meaning and that which we take for reality. Yet despite this, the concept of everyday life and many of the insights that the phenomenological tradition has developed have played a significant role in the ongoing expansion of CT and its avowedly radical and critical agenda.

Perhaps the most significant early attempt to combine the concerns of a Marxist inspired critical theory with a concern for the significance and study of the realm of everyday life was that developed in the work of Henri Lefebvre (1992). For Lefebvre, writing in the 1940’s, everyday life was to be understood as the contested terrain in which our everyday experiences and, the understandings which we derive from them, mediate and are mediated by the relations and processes which for Lefebvre are derivative of the rationalizing logic of capitalist modernity. As such, it represents the site at which alienation, primarily the outcome of the differentiation process associated with this logic, is both experienced and resisted. It is where the contradictions and paradoxes of an age in which human potential is both realized and retarded are played out, where the ‘dialectic of Enlightenment’, as Adorno and Horkheimer (1979) would term it, is most starkly exposed. As such, Lefebvre’s approach, pointing as he did to the decline in the
relationship between humanity and nature, and the consequence of the rise of the principles of industrial modernity as exemplifying the decline of the importance of the everyday in human life, places him far more comfortably within the critical tradition of the Frankfurt School, than with the more orthodox Marxism with which he was frequently associated. For Lefebvre, everyday life as the realm of communication, love, friendship and the taken for granted aspects of being in the modern world, is a space to be both studied and defended from the process of differentiation that lays at the heart of capitalist modernity.

A more recent critical conception of everyday life as a contested space has emerged in the work of Jurgen Habermas (1984, 1987) and his theory of *communicative action*. It is here that Habermas develops a bifurcated conception of society, comprising of what he terms ‘system’ and ‘lifeworld’. System refers to the domain of ‘formal’ or ‘instrumental’ rationality. That is, the realm in which formal strategies for the efficient co-ordination of complex socio-economic relations are deployed and in which differentiation and the rational calculation of means take precedence. The lifeworld, in contrast, is understood as the social space in which, as Seidman (1997: 197) puts it

Social coordination or regulation occurs by means of shared beliefs and values; in the lifeworld, individuals draw from custom and cultural traditions to construct identities, negotiate situational definitions, coordinate action and create social solidarity.

However, unlike the first generation of critical theorists, Habermas rejects what he considers to be a reliance on an essentially Marxist philosophy of history and its tendency to directly link socio-economic mechanisms of integration with the development of individual states of subjective consciousness. Rather, he seeks to direct CT beyond the question of consciousness and towards the analysis of language and communication as the medium through which everyday, intuitive understandings come into conflict with the linguistic manifestations of the types of regulatory mechanisms that concerned his predecessors. It is within the lifeworld then, that Habermas posits the space in which the possibility of open and undistorted dialogue exists and, subsequently, where human understanding and consensus can prosper. This is not to suggest, however, that rationalization per se is a phenomenon that Habermas considers unique to the systems world. Both dimensions of society have, for Habermas, undergone a broad process of rationalization, which in itself he sees as an indicator of social progress. Rather, it is the form of rationalization that concerns him. At the systems level for example, the growth of differentiated institutions, associated with a formal mode of rationality, has resulted in the ability to control and coordinate the increasingly complex socio-economic environment associated with capitalist modernity. At the level of the lifeworld as well, this differentiation process, in this case that of the spheres of knowledge such as science and art, combined with the increasing human capacity for reflexivity are also indicators of what he considers to be a progressive process of rationalization. Yet this remains progressive only in that it has resulted in the acceptance of the individual subject as an autonomous and self-legislating being, which is the prerequisite for undistorted communicative relations and the establishment of a mode of communicative rationality.
What concerns him then is the tendency of aspects of the ‘lifeworld’ to come increasingly under the direct dominance of the formal, or instrumental rationality which underpins certain functional subsystems; most notably those associated with the regulation and maintenance of capitalist exchange relations. This, he argues, underpins a retrogressive shift from what he terms communicative rational action to purposive rational action.

Media such as money and power attach to empirical ties; they encode a purposive rational attitude toward calculable amounts of value and make it possible to exert a generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants which bypass processes of consensus orientated communication. Inasmuch as they do not merely simplify linguistic communication, but replace it with a symbolic generalization of rewards and punishments, the lifeworld contexts in which processes of reaching and understanding are always embedded are devalued in favour of media-steered interactions; the lifeworld is no longer needed for the coordination of action.

Habermas 1987: 183 original emphasis

Habermas refers to such incursions into the communicative space of the lifeworld as ‘colonization’; a process that distorts and undermines the cultural and ethical foundations of everyday communicative practices and their critical (reflexive) potential. Such incursions are not ‘all or nothing’ events however. Rather, the process of colonization is seen to be most acute at times of economic crisis when the everyday communicative activities of individuals need to be harnessed in the service of greater levels of say, ‘efficient’ production and consumption. Yet, while this in itself may result in an increase in certain social pathologies such as ‘alienation and the unsettling of collective identities’ (Habermas 1989: 299) Habermas is also at pains to consider the resistive space that is everyday life. As such, any such critical exploration of the everyday shares in common with the phenomenological tradition, a commitment to revealing and understanding how, in our everyday communicative practices, we may resist the colonization process. Thus, the linguistic turn in Habermas’ version of CT directs us towards the critical investigation of possible sites of incursion; sites at which the rationality of the systems world invades the everyday realm of communicative rationality and language; and, the ways and forms in which such incursions can be and are resisted.

Critics of Everyday Life

So far then, I have attempted to outline the basic features of two broad approaches to the study of everyday life. The former draws largely on the tradition of symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology, and posits the everyday as the backdrop against which individuals make sense of, and give meaning to, their experiences of ‘being-in-the-world’. That is, they seek as Wagner (1973: 70) argues, to understand the ways in which the individual constructs their own belief systems in relation to the resources provided by official systems and discursive resources he/she ‘encounters in the small sector of the society within which he lives, and by the same reinterpretation not modification of the institutional tenets are presented to him in the
The second approach takes as its starting point the view that everyday life, as a conceptual site of potentially uninhibited inter-subjective communication, is threatened by the expansion of instrumentalized relations of power and control which threaten the substantively rational nature of communicative action.

Yet despite its previously alluded to popularity (or perhaps indeed because of it), the concept of the everyday and those approaches associated with it have, throughout their lifetime, also been the focus of intense criticisms. For example, while the popularity of phenomenological and related approaches to sociology has clearly experienced a revival over the last decade or so, with its techniques being applied to everything from the world of leisure (Rojek 1995) through to disability studies (Hughes and Paterson 1997), it continues to be seen as vulnerable on a number of accounts. Most notable amongst these is the positivist-inspired critique that phenomenology is incapable of producing little more than subjective descriptions of what, after all, are little more than peoples common sense understandings of the world. In taking such a subjectivist route, it has also been accused of simultaneously ignoring, or at least over simplifying, the inter-relationship between individual understanding and macro social structures (Mouzelis 1995). Even where attempts to mediate this relationship dialectically are evident, such as in the work of Berger and Luckman, other commentators have been wary of the success of such efforts. Willmott (1990), for example, in his analysis of subjectivity and the capitalist labour process, describes their attempts at mediation as little more than crudely mechanistic, ignoring the continual inter-play of the subjective and objective dimensions of the subjectivization process. A further objection to the phenomenological emphasis on the ‘world-constituting’ dimension of human subjectivity is the way its proponents have tended to celebrate somewhat uncritically the capacity of the individual in everyday life to resist structural power relations. An example of this tendency can be seen, for example, in the previously alluded to work of de Certeau (1984: xv) and his study of cultural consumption and his representation of the everyday as the space of subjective affirmation of relative autonomy. Thus, while such an approach clearly has its merits, especially in relation to the question of how individuals are able to reappropriate and redefine the meanings ascribed to certain cultural resources, its tendency to reinforce the ideological structures of bourgeois humanism, in which the individual is posited as an isolated and self-determining subject, can be seen to underplay the impact of structural power relations and their ability to constitute subjective understandings of self and other.

While of a far more critical and indeed structuralist orientation, the CT of Habermas has not escaped the lash of the critics pen either; especially in relation to his own formulation of the everyday lifeworld. For example, Alvesson and Willmott (1996) have noted how feminist theorists such as Fraser (1987) have been highly critical of his tendency to overlook the continuities between his categories of the system and lifeworld. In particular they note how the operation of patriarchal power, viewed by Habermas as a colonizing force, is itself intimately embedded within lifeworld expectations and practices. As such, his emphasis on the system as the expression of the logic of capitalist enterprise results in a conceptual blindspot when it comes to the existence of taken for granted assumptions of male dominance which underpin much of what is taken as everyday life. However, a more searching critique of both Habermas and the concept of everyday life in general, is
that which has recently been proffered by Crook (1988). Crook, critically views the concept of everyday life as a misguided attempt to impose a notion of homogeneity, and indeed purity, on a disparate set of concepts and phenomena. Habermas in particular is also charged with a related attempt to impose a unity on what Crook considers to be distinctively formal and substantive categories. The former refers to his ‘communicative-theoretic’ conception of the lifeworld as a site of meta-theoretical activity while the latter, implies the kind of everyday space of taken for grantedness which provides the basis for the more traditional phenomenological accounts of everyday life. This leads Habermas, in Crook’s view, to overlook for example the ways in which new technologies, particularly those associated with new modes of communication, may generate ‘interactional and interpretive competencies that transform the meaning and texture of ‘everyday life’ for members of advanced societies’ (Crook 1998: 533). That is, it precludes, due to both its totalizing, nostalgic and purist conception of everyday life, and its imposition of a formalized structure of communicative action onto what is to stand as ‘authentic’ lifeworld activity, the ability to study and understand the differing ways in which, in this example, various sociotechnical networks impact upon an equally diverse range of social relations. As such, Habermas and those other theorists Crook associates with this perspective, are accused of holding to a static and undynamic conception of everyday life in which they ignore, according to Crook (1998: 538), that ‘human experience is always ‘mediated’, that culture has always been material culture, that technologies and representations of all cultures create “worlds” that “in some part supplant those of day-to-day life”’.

While Crook’s rejection of the everyday as a useful conceptual category is certainly persuasive, most notably in terms of his suspicion of the purity of the everyday sphere, its assertion that the mythologizing of the everyday distracts from the contribution it has made to the re-focusing of attention on the ‘micro-politics of conformity and resistance’ and the ‘probelmatizing [of] the production and management of experience’ (Crook 1998: 539) could be somewhat less well taken. Certainly, a heightened sense of reflexive awareness can be seen as vital if we are not to impose some romanticized or nostalgic presupposition onto the substantive activities that may be termed ‘everyday’. Yet Crook’s rejection of the idea of the everyday must be understood within the wider context of his previous attempts to develop a critical account of contemporary sociology which, drawing on themes to be found within postmodernist accounts of society, seeks to reject the idea that the ‘social’ can be seen to possess any level of autonomy or causal potentiality (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992). Clearly, such a perspective is immediately at odds with any account of social relations that would aim to posit a meaningful inter-relationship between subjective understanding and agency, and the operation of extra-individual discursive structures of power and control. However, in addition to the philosophical and political objections which one could raise in answer to such an assertion, I would contend that the heuristic value that the idea of the everyday represents (if nothing more than that of a spur towards uncovering and framing new modes of critical research), is one which sociology would be better served by holding on to if it is not to find itself losing sight of one its most vital arenas for enquiry.
Critical Management Studies and Everyday Managing

How though, can the (contested) sociological concept of ‘everyday life’ contribute to the development of a ‘critical’ management studies? Firstly, one must try to be clear about what one means by the term management. This, of course, is not necessarily an easy task as the origins and ‘nature’ of management remains a topic of some disputation. Yet it would appear that central to the question of what defines management is the apparent schism between the idea of management as a set of formalized, professionally regulated practices and procedures and, a more constructivist position which views management as the outcome of human understanding and the meaningful actions that derive from these; that is, to put it simply, the idea that management is what those designated as managers think and do. As Grey (1997) notes, the former view is one that is closely associated with the management education industry, exemplified in the realm of the management textbook. Here, management is presented as a set of formal practices that can be taught and learnt by the prospective professional. However, this has been increasingly challenged by the constructivist view that identifies management more closely with the beliefs and activities of those who are classified within the occupational group termed ‘managers’. In this version, management is a more open-ended activity, one which is contingent on environmental factors, both internal and external, and the meanings the individuals concerned ascribe to the them. Yet such a distinction may itself be too simple. While it would certainly seem that management is something which is largely conceived of as congruent with a particular organizational context and set of occupational practices; as Watson (1994) notes, even within such contexts, management must be understood as consisting of several distinct, yet inter-related elements

1 Management as function: as the overall steering or direction of an organization.
2 Management as activities: as a set of activities carried out in order to bring about the overall steering or directing of the organization.
3 Management as a team of people: as the group of people responsible for steering or directing the organization through carrying out the various activities which make this possible.

Watson 1994: 35 original emphasis

Here we can see then, a combination of management as formal activity and management as something that emerges from an individual’s or groups self-understanding of what it is to manage and be a manager; with the first two points emphasizing the former, while the final point clearly resonating with the latter constructivist position. As such, management as a formal activity is a complex phenomenon, unaccommodating to simplistic categorizations or swift dissection. On the other hand though, perhaps this is being a little too generous. Under capitalism, professional management, however one conceptualizes it, is remains universally concerned with several core imperatives. Efficiency, effectiveness and control all underpin what it is to manage in the formal, professionalized sense of the word. It is from this realization, and a desire to develop a range of critical insights into just how these imperatives are realized, and their broader, often un-
considered consequences which has led to the development of critical management studies.

However, as with the idea of ‘management’, there is, at this stage at least, minimal agreement over what the term ‘critical management studies’ (Alvesson and Willmott 1992, Fournier and Grey 1998) actually refers to. As Sotirin and Tyrell (1998: 303) suggest, the term itself is somewhat ambiguous. It could, they note, refer to a particular analytical perspective which is critical of current management practice, or alternatively one which is critical for management or even one that refers to an approach to the study of management that is critical about management as a repressive activity tout court. This is not however simply a question of semantics. Each descriptor carries with it very different connotations about how the critical management scholar should approach their object of inquiry. For example, I found myself in difficulty when I declared (on reflection somewhat naively) on an e-mail discussion list that, in response to the question “what does a manager do when they embrace the central tenants of critical theory ?”, they should cease being managers. However, I then subsequently received a number of private replies informing me that I had, to put it politely, missed the point. Rather, I was informed, that critical theory (understood by most of the respondents to signify a critical way of thinking) should be seen as a resource that can enable managers to do their jobs in a more reflexive and sensitive manner. This clash of paradigms, one premised upon a critique about management, the other on a critique of management illustrates what appears to be a fundamental conflict within the sub-discipline over the normative and political principles on which such a project should proceed (as well as both about the terms being deployed and the approaches employed). Undoubtedly, this difference of perspective was exacerbated by the fact that while I am based within a sociology department with, it must be admitted, minimal interest in the justification of management practice, my respondents were all management educators or practitioners who, understandably, shared a somewhat different interest in defending the idea of management, albeit a revised one. Yet, even within the ranks of management educators and academics such distinctions remain essentially contested. Alvesson and Willmott (1996) for example, both Professors in Business and Management Schools, while at the forefront in the attempt to incorporate CT into management education, both continue to underpin such attempts with a commitment to the essential inevitability of management as an expression of the differentiation process of modernist social relations. Thus, they argue that

Since CT [Critical Theory] unsettles many received wisdoms about management, it is worth stressing that it is not inherently or relentlessly “anti-management”. The intent of CT is not to indulge in the Utopian project of eliminating hierarchy, removing specialist divisions of labour or even abolishing the separation of management form other forms of work.

Alvesson and Willmott 1996: 18

However, this move towards reconciliation between, in this case, the tradition of CT, and the activity of management is questionable on a number of grounds. Firstly, the Frankfurt
School tradition of CT upon which they draw has traditionally opposed the rationality of social differentiation which Alvesson and Willmott, if not seeking to defend, appear to accept as given. Yet it was the aim of the Frankfurt School to identify the potential for a non-hierarchical, non-differentiated society within the contradictions and struggles of contemporary socio-economic relations not, I would argue, to seek to reconcile the tensions and contradictions of capitalist modernity artificially. While this concern is, admittedly, less evident in the more recent work of Habermas, this may say more about the increasingly liberal trajectory of his writing, than it does about CT as envisaged by its founders. While of course, this may be put down simply to a point of interpretation, the potential implications of this reconciliatory approach are concerning. That is, it opens up space not only for a reconciliation of management and critical theory, but also, for the possibility of a process managerialist colonization, the likes of Alvesson and Willmott are seeking to contest. In such a scenario, CT becomes, as Fournier and Grey (1998: 15) have expressed it, ‘just another tool kit for managers’. A toolkit which ironically can then be deployed in the service of occluding or even legitimizing forms of instrumental domination. Examples of this can be seen already in say the mobilization of various discourses of empowerment, such as workplace democracy and managerial reflexivity, which draw their legitimacy from the idea that they represent an attempt to humanize the organizational lifeworld, yet apparently serve the goal of rational efficiency and the maximization of employee productivity. Even the emergence of CMS itself, as a significant discursive resource for management education, points to this process. That is, it can be understood as little more than a further example of the power of management educators to identify and assimilate, potentially oppositional discourses, colonizing their critical force in the process. This has resulted, it could be argued, in those who have been attracted to the critical study of management, as a dimension of a broader philosophical and socio-theoretical account of modernity, suddenly finding themselves on the inside pissing out rather than on the outside pissing in. A situation which, of course, for those who have a professional interest in the academic legitimization of managerial education represents a far more tolerable, (and indeed drier) state of affairs.

Yet while such criticisms of the still somewhat embryonic project of CMS may, at first sight appear damming, viable alternatives it must be admitted are somewhat thin on the ground. While perhaps the only defensible way forward is to follow the concluding observations of Fournier and Grey (1988) and abandon CMS in favour of a new approach which perhaps one could term, somewhat ironically CCMS, ‘critical of critical management studies’, the nihilism implicit in such an approach sits uneasily with the normative convictions which drive the majority of those committed to employing rational critique in the service of improving the quality of human experience. However, what this may also suggest is the need for an approach which, while critical of attempts by management educators to claim entirely for their own the critical study of management, provides for a research agenda which is both inclusive of a number of theoretical and normative traditions while perhaps reframing a number of questions about the relationship between management and the broader socio-cultural context within which it is situated.
It is at this juncture that the idea of, and the traditions associated with, the study of everyday life may provide one possible avenue along which CMS may wish to proceed. That is, it asks not how management as a combination of discursive and technical formations may operate more appropriately (however one may choose to define this) but, rather, how management as a socio-culturally embedded phenomenon draws and impacts upon the everyday lifeworld both as a cultural resource and, as a mode of possible containment. Adherents to the former of these two approaches may for example, seek to explore how both professional managers and those who live and work outside the formal framework of the profession draw upon, and make sense of management oriented discourses to in turn, make sense of their everyday experiences of what it is to be a manager. It acknowledges that within any phenomenologically-oriented situation a form of double hermeneutic arises in which both the resource at hand is interpreted and framed in terms of the context and tradition within which it is experienced and, which at one and the same time, is deployed in the service of a second order of understanding, one which focuses on the sense-making activities which make the negotiating of everyday life possible. The second approach, while still embedded in the context of everyday life activity, adopts an explicitly critical position in that it seeks to identify the ways in which the adoption of such managerial grounded modes of understanding serve to repress the possible emergence of other forms of human consciousness and experience. As such, it is founded on a normative conviction about the essentially colonizing nature of management discourse, as one which serves the incorporation of the subject into a de-humanizing web of instrumental rationalities associated with the functioning of a capitalist logic of production and exchange. Yet, despite their differences, they are unified by a meta-theoretical commitment to the charting of the everyday manifestations of management discourse as it impacts on the ways in which people make sense of and traverse the most mundane aspects of their lives.

Engaging With The Everyday

At best, the above represents a tentative exploration of one possible research agenda that may prove fruitful for a CMS committed to the pursuit of novel and innovative modes of analysis. That is, a CMS that strives to acknowledge the existence of divergent traditions while continuing to conceptualize management as more than simply a set of technical procedures which function within the tightly defined environment of the work organization. However, it would be erroneous to suggest that this somehow signifies an entirely novel set of concerns or approaches. Both the phenomenological as well as the more critical approach to issues of management organization have, it must be said, been with us in one form or another for some time now. Of the more strictly interpretive tradition, perhaps the most notably work of recent years has been that associated with Watson (1994, 1995, 1998) and his attempt to develop and illustrate what he describes as his ‘strategic exchange perspective’ (Watson 1994: 18). Drawing on the constructivist approach I identified earlier with the work of Berger and Luckman, Watson has sought to expose and understand the ways in which individual managers draw upon various discursive resources in an attempt to carry out and make sense of their everyday practices as professional managers. In his, In Search of Management (1994), for example Watson recounts an extensive period of ethnographic fieldwork he undertook amongst managers.
at a UK telecommunications plant. Here, his priority was to understand and articulate how managers engage in daily sense-making activities which draw upon the discursive resources provided for them by (amongst other things) encounters with everyday life both within, and externally to, the organizational domain. His jointly authored paper of 1998, in which the methodological approach shifts from ethnography to textual analysis, also continues this theme (Watson and Bargiela-Chiappini 1998). Here, the objects of study are copies of two prominent personnel management journals, from the UK and Italy, each of which are presented as providing discursive resources for specialist managers who are able to draw on them in an effort to make sense of their positions and activities within the context of their broader organizational responsibilities. However, it is also emphasized throughout this paper that this in no one way flow of traffic. It is understood that the intended readership will not only deploy such resources to make sense of their own organizational lives, but will, prior to such a movement, seek to make sense of the resources which they encounter and appropriate them as they see fit. As such the contents of such magazines act as resources for sense-making work, not determinants of meaning. Both of these studies then, take as their primary concern the ways in which resources are both constituted through, and constitutive of, the meanings those individuals ascribe to them in the course of their everyday activities as personnel managers. Of course, it could be argued that the professional activity of managing is not in itself an everyday activity, and as such, lies outside of the bounds of our concern. Yet, while this is not an unreasonable objection, as I noted earlier, the actual definition of the ‘everyday’ remains a contestable one. Furthermore, it could equally be argued that such a rigid demarcation is non-sensical, in that today a significant proportion of our formal working lives are equally comprised of activities which we would normally consider to be part of the everyday (joking, making decisions, falling in love) while that which we perceive of as say leisure, is often intimately bound up with work-orientated activities. As such, the ‘everyday’ and the ‘working day’ no longer sit either side of secure boundaries as perhaps they may have once seen to. Conversely, however, what is equally important here is the potential to expand this form of analysis to the realm that lies outside of the formal work organization. That is, to the realm of everyday management that Watson seemed to be alluding to in the opening quotation. The extension of such forms of ethnographic study and textual analysis to an examination of the prevalence of discursive resources in the everyday lifeworld which, themselves draw upon the language and perceived priorities of professional management could provide important sociological insights into the extent to which they provide cultural or discursive resources which enable individuals to ‘manage’ and cope with the demands of everyday life and, how in this process are they appropriated and modified, often in ways far from the intent of those by whom they were conceived originally.

However, as I have already noted on several occasions, such a mode of analysis can be considered to be limited by its apparent lack of explicit critical intent. That is, it suggests that by assuming that we are all in some way managers of our everyday lives, that discursive resources which draw their legitimacy from their association with the formal activity of professional organizational management are taken to represent the most appropriate mode for everyday understanding and activity. This objection is notably raised in Grey’s (1997) assault on the proposition he finds in Alvesson and Willmott
(1996) that we are all managers in one way or another. For Grey, while such a claim may be relatively critical in intent, in that it seeks to demystify the activities of professional managers, he objects to the way in which it ‘entails a way of apprehending what it is to be human in general managerial terms, and in this sense represents a diminution of the multiplicity of human potentials through the invocation of the one-dimensional discourse of management’ (Grey 1997: 29). As such, he considers this assertion to be an expression of the very type of colonization that CMS seeks to oppose; for it exemplifies the process by which what it is to ‘be human’ is subsumed under the rubric of efficient resource allocation and a means-orientated rationality. Ironically, however, it is in the work of Alvesson and Willmott that perhaps the most useful articulation of how various management technologies have been clearly devised as tools of colonization within the contemporary work organization, and how Habermasian CT can be deployed is to be found. While in keeping with Habermas’ own measured view of the actual extent to which such technologies are capable of achieving complete closure, their work has clearly suggested the extent to attempts colonize the subjectivity of its employees has sat at the heart of a multitude of contemporary managerial strategies. This is particularly evident in a number of critical inquiries into contemporary developments in the management of corporate culture and concomitant attempts to subsume individual interests under those of the corporate mission of efficiency and profitability (Willmott 1993, Hancock 1997). Furthermore, unlike Watson’s analysis that tended to focus exclusively on the organizational lifeworld of managers, Alvesson and Willmott also note how such colonizing processes have extended into the extra-organizational sphere. This is illustrated in their brief allusion to the ways in which the sphere of consumption has been subject to the colonization of system values, most notable in the cultural portrayal of efficient patterns of consumption which serve to promote the adoption of idealized lifestyles, themselves the products of ‘expert promoters and packagers of goods and services’ (Alvesson and Willmott 1996: 106). This, I would suggest, provides albeit a tentative insight into the ways in which a critical approach to the relationship between management and the everyday could also serve as means of critically exploring the ways in which the values and principles of formal management are increasingly ‘spilling over’ into the everyday. Not only in the realm of consumption, but the entire range of individual and intersubjective experiences and activities of sense-making.

Final Musings – From The Final Frontier to Coaching The Soul

As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, it was not my intention to present an empirical justification of its central theme. That is, it does not contain extensive examples of the kinds of processes that it has speculated about. Nevertheless, one does not have to dedicate a vast amount of time or expertise to develop, at the very least, a vague sense of how increasingly inter-twined the relationship between management and the activities of everyday life has become. Often this relationship may be one that is implicit rather than immediately obvious. A good example of this can be found in the plethora of lifestyle magazines that today adorn the shelves of virtually every newsagent throughout the land. Here, the term ‘lifestyle’ is deployed to signify not simply a range of different activities, each of which is to be seen as concomitant elements of a rich and varied existence. Rather, on closer reading of the actual contents of such magazines, lifestyle takes on a far
more specific meaning. It is rather, an imperative with the emphasis on the second syllable. The message is that one must ‘style’ ones life though carefully adherence to regimes of bodily manipulation, social organization and even spiritual investment. Here, the potential for discursive resources derived from the world of formal management to provide the templates by which life must be lived is almost unavoidable. For example, conquering fear is portrayed as possible through the ‘setting of achievable goals’ (Mueller 1996:54) while to practice good sex requires that men adopt a 15 minute schedule of foreplay activity (Sacks 1996: 58). Admittedly, while this is not language that is necessarily dependent on the formal activity of management, it would be difficult to ignore the obvious resonances that exist between the two forms (especially when one takes into account the projected readership and the overall tone of such articles). However, perhaps one does not have to dig quite so deeply to uncover the deepening affinity between the language and imperatives of formal management and the sphere of the everyday.

Beyond the search for the perfect six pack, the 60-second orgasm or the ideal relationship, the language and culture of management has manifested itself in some of the most unlikely of places. One novel example is the appearance of a symbiosis of contemporary management speak and the techno-jargon and morality tales of the science fiction series, Star Trek. Books such as Marinaccio’s (1994) *All I Really Need To Know I Learned From Star Trek and Roberts’* (1996) *Make It So; Leadership Lessons from Star Trek The Next Generation* offer up what the authors consider to be the lessons that each and every one of us can learn from the principles and practices of contemporary management wrapped up, in the admittedly entertaining, candy coating of the activities and adventures of the characters of Star Trek. For example, in Marinaccio’s (1994: 8) offering we are reminded of a few simple truths to ensure we live a successful and productive life

Everyone has a role in life. Sulu is the navigator. Uhura is the communications specialist. Do your own job and the ship will function more smoothly.

As such, they seek to break down the perceived barriers between what is initially set out as a specialist, technical mode of knowledge and, via the popular cultural form that is television science fiction, the world of everyday social activity and particularly ethics and decision making. Here, management and ‘popular culture’ enter an almost hybridized or inter-textual relationship, feeding and drawing off each other in a way that would not look amiss in the script of an episode of the series itself. Management is something which we not only need to learn how ‘to do’ here and now in the everyday, but something which will we still be doing in around two centuries from now.

However, one does not even have to enter such esoteric realms to encounter the increasing emphasis on the need to manage everyday life. For example, time which as Lefebvre (1992: 52) noted, is one of the basic categories of everyday life, is the subject of an explosion in ‘how to manage it texts’ which, while ostensible marketed as improving ones ability to perform in the workplace, make a virtue of extolling the ‘transferability’ of their insights into the everyday domain. Indeed, as I sit here at my computer I see my
Lotus Organizer computer programmer reminding me it is ‘The Leading Time Management Software For Computers’. Though why on earth my computer needs to have its ‘time managed’ is beyond me, I can only assume it has a busier social life than I do. Time is also an important variable for an emerging breed of personal managers or ‘coaches’. In the USA, and increasingly in Europe and Japan, the phenomena of personal coaching provides an excellent illustration of how management as a formal, technical activity is increasingly being utilized to supplement the day to day ‘life skills’ of individuals. Coaches act as a form of personal trainer, recommending to their clients many of the techniques and practices that have, over the last decade or so, come into vogue within the managerial profession. Eileen Mulligan (1999) for example is a British ‘coach’ with a background in industry and business consultancy. Her recent textbook for a better life is littered with resources that she clearly derives from her time in organizational management. For example, the time scale (seven days) for a noticeable improvement provides a clearly quantifiable backdrop and achievable ‘target’ for the activities she suggests. These activities commence with the design and production of personal appraisal forms and questionnaires and continue through a range of formalized tasks, including for example, the production of a personal mission statement, the importance of which cannot, it would seem, be overstated!

For some individuals, their mission statement becomes the single and most significant aspect in their life. Mother Theresa dedicated her life to God and caring for the poor. Many religious leaders have spent a lifetime in prayer and mediation, their mission being enlightenment. There is one thing for sure: having a mission in life gives you a sense of purpose.

Mulligan 1999: 30

While the implication that many of our great religious figures could have achieved so much more if only they had formalized their calling into a personal mission statement may be hard to take too seriously, the underlying message is one of great interest. That is, it suggests clearly that the self-management of ones everyday activities, and the management of people and resources within complex organizations is essentially dependent on the same principles and processes; and that as such, the same or at least similar procedures and techniques apply to both. Of course, as I have already noted, how one may choose to theorize or evaluate such conceptual relations remains, largely, an issue of personal normative commitment. Yet one cannot help but be struck, in this particular example, by the relationship between the achievement of personal fulfillment and the freeing up of more time and energy for success in the world of work. Indeed, work frequently becomes the paradigm in which the ‘new you’ will both achieve and experience new levels of confidence and success. Even the section on values and goals commences with an illustration of a moral dilemma focussing on what to when one finds out that ones friend at work has been undertaking to fiddle their expenses. Despite their protestations that the company makes more than she will ever earn as a justification for this activity, the moral solution that is offered is one that must seek to curtail this activity as soon as is possible. Thankfully, the proposed solution is not to shop your mate, but ensure that the expenses forms are re-designed in such a way that she wont get away with
it again. A solution which, under the circumstances was both rational and efficient and, more importantly, avoided any messy personal confrontations. Successful, rational self-management is therefore possible even at the most personal level of individual morality!

Conclusion

The management of everyday life. A question, a perspective, a research agenda or perhaps nothing more than another academic soundbite, devoid of substance and meaning. Perhaps it is all and none of these. Yet what I have tried to do in this paper is to suggest that there are a number of research traditions upon which CMS may be able to draw if it is serious about extending its activities beyond the traditional concerns of management education and the environment of the Business School and the MBA. As a conceptual backdrop or organizing theme, the ‘everyday’ provides an opportunity for both interpretive and critical analysis while remaining sensitive to the issues surrounding the dialectics of self and other and self and society. It is open to analysis via interpretive strategies associated with phenomenology, the critical hermeneutics of Habermassian critical theory, or even the post-structuralist concerns with discourse and power to be found in the work of Foucault and Derrida.

Certainly different aspects of the idea will appeal to colleagues working in different academic environments and disciplines. Sociologists of culture for example may wish to explore how management ‘speak’ has pervaded the realm of popular literature or music, while management academics concerned with understanding the evolution of personnel managers may focus on how the discursive resources derived from their professional education are deployed in making sense of the relationship between their professional activities and their daily responsibilities and moral obligations. Yet the strength here, or so it would seem to me, is for a genuine cross-fertilization of ideas and perspectives.

Conflict of course remains a perennial possibility. Differing normative commitments, methodological approaches and even the possibility of incommensurable professional discourses all stalk the hope that such an organizing theme can provide a sense of coherence and relative unity. To mix the work of those committed to say a strategic exchange approach with those of a fiercely Frankfurt School orientation may, I accept, be something akin to mixing oil and water, or even worse, petrol and a lighted match! Of course, exactly the same concerns can and, indeed have, been laid at the feet of CMS more generally, and how that will fair as an academic and political project has yet to be seen. Yet one only has to look briefly at any tradition within the social sciences and beyond to realize that, despite those who seem to advocate unity at all cost (Donaldson 1996), knowledge, however one may wish to define it, often flourishes best in the soil of diversity rather than in the sands of conformity.

Anyhow, enough of this. I am almost out of time. It’s Friday evening and I still have a number of targets to reach for the week. Finishing this paper was one of them and as such it must be said that I am experiencing a great sense of inner warmth. However, in line with my personal mission statement and my daily time management schedule I still have
to fit in my individually tailored physical work-out regime at the gym and spend a minimum of 1.5 hours quality time with my spouse. Don’t get me wrong though, flexibility in my life remains the key; yet this is now combined with a commitment to total quality in every activity I undertake. Mmmm, I suppose I had better stop off at the toilet on the way out though….now where did I leave that stopwatch?

Notes

i As in the interactionism of Mead, the debt to Hegel’s (ed. 1977) phenomenology of spirit is evident here.
ii Originally published in 1947 as Critique de la vie quotidienne I: Introduction.
iii Originally published in 1944 as Dialektik der Auflarung.

iv De Certeau’s defense of the everyday is premised, most notably, on a critique of what he considers the overlay ‘structuralist’ and ‘determinist’ work of Foucault.

v It has been pointed out to me by several colleagues that one obvious and glaring omission from this paper is the contribution that a post-structuralist critique of the ‘management of everyday life’ could make to the overall case. I would like to emphasis that I am certainly receptive to the possible utility of say Lyotard’s concept of performativity or Foucault’s writings on power/knowledge and the constitution of subjectivity to such an agenda. However, restrictions of time and space, as well as the fact that I feel that such a discussion would detract from some of the issues raised have led me to believe that perhaps this would be best left to a future paper.

References


